

What Is Open Source?

Open Source offers a different approach to the way computer programs are created and maintained. Open Source software is written in a cooperative and collaborative manner. Software professionals and volunteers from all over the world contribute to this development process which has been evolving for many years.

The “source code,” the underlying blueprint that creates any computer program, must be made freely available as a condition of being called Open Source. Open Source software is written to be shared not kept the proprietary secret of a single company. Some large and familiar corporations such as IBM, Sun Microsystems and AOL-Time Warner have contributed to Open Source program and application development.

Many businesses and government agencies are now starting to realize that there are great benefits in using Open Source software. Three benefits that stand out are flexibility, security and cost.

Proprietary products like Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Office or Internet Explorer, for example, do not ship with the program source code. If you have a serious problem with any program of this kind, you will have to wait for the parent company to fix it. Because Open Source software ships with the source code, any properly trained computer programmer is capable of fixing or enhancing Open Source software.

Malicious programmers, so called “hackers,” readily exploit many of the hidden features of proprietary software to cause vandalism or gain access to valuable private information. With Open Source software such security problems can be anticipated and prevented or dealt with quickly once they occur.

What you don't get with Open Source software are costly licensing fees, the threat of licensing audits, forced software upgrades due to file and format changes and software that contains features you don't want or need but cannot remove.

Most Open Source software is designed to run under Linux. Linux is a unique Open Source operating environment different from Windows and Mac OS but able to do all of the same things; surf the web, send e-mail, process documents, burn CDs, scan, print, send faxes and so forth. Linux and Open Source software can be installed on any computer that runs Windows or Mac OS.

Linux, as well, has been adapted to run on many different kinds of computers including the mainframe computers manufactured by IBM. Linux and Open Source software offer a reliable, lower cost alternative to commercial proprietary software and do not require the newest and fastest computers to run well.

LOSURS

Linux/Open Source Users of Regina, Sask.
(LOSURS) Inc.



LOSURS is a users' group for users of Linux and other similar systems, serving Regina, Saskatchewan and the surrounding area. The group was originally founded by Scott Wunsch in October 1998, and has been rapidly growing in membership since then. LOSURS currently boasts over 400 members.

<http://www.losurs.org/>

The Goals of LOSURS

1. **To assist members in using Linux and other Open Source software.** This is accomplished through regular meetings which incorporate informative presentations and by making available a variety of useful documentation and tips. It is also accomplished by providing forums which allow members to ask questions of other members; LOSURS is an amazing pool of talent and professionals.
2. **To assist members in expanding their knowledge about computing technology.** Through the same forums that allow members to ask questions, members also have the opportunity to be exposed to many new ideas and concepts. Watching other users interact can be an excellent form of education.
3. **To encourage more people to try, and hopefully switch to, Linux or other Open Source software.** Similarly, we would also like to encourage businesses to adopt Linux or other Open Source software.
4. **To support and promote Open Source ideals.** We strongly believe in Open Source and other ethical ideals with respect to software development, and would like to help more people to understand them.
5. **To provide an informal social environment** in which people with common interests (Linux, Open Source, or even computers and technology in general) can meet and interact. This environment also provides a perfect opportunity to make new contacts in the local computing community.

Membership in LOSURS

Membership in LOSURS has many benefits. LOSURS operates several mailing lists, including a Q&A mailing list where you can ask technical questions to be answered by other knowledgeable members.

LOSURS also holds monthly meetings, which include an open discussion segment, as well as a planned presentation. Upcoming meeting dates can always be found on the web site (they cycle through different days of the week, to ensure everybody has an opportunity to attend).

Membership in LOSURS is free, so sign up today! More information about joining LOSURS can be found on the web site.

For More Information...

For more information about LOSURS, and about Linux in general, be sure to check out the LOSURS web site:

<http://www.losurs.org/>



What Is Linux?

Linux is a multi-user, multi tasking operating system. It runs on many platforms, from StrongARM-powered hand-held computers, through PCs, all the way up to IBM S/390 mainframes. It implements a superset of the POSIX standard, and interoperates well with other operating systems, including MacOS and Windows. It is freely available and can be copied and redistributed without fees or royalties.

Linux has a broad range of applications available, including several office productivity suites (such as OpenOffice.org), graphics software like the GIMP, and more.

Support for Linux is unparalleled. Many companies offer direct support for Linux. Because it is an Open Source system, all information about it is available to developers and users alike. This means that it is exceptionally easy to write robust, reliable software for Linux, or to tailor the existing software to your needs. There are no proprietary interfaces or hidden features known only to the developers. And because Linux isn't dependent on a single company for its development, there is no worry that it will suddenly lose support.

Linux provides one of the most secure platforms around. The open peer-review of Linux code by thousands of the best software engineers ensures that Linux suffers from very few security flaws. That is difficult to manage when operating systems are developed in a closed environment. When a problem is discovered, it is virtually always fixed in a matter of hours, or less. The solution is then immediately made available on the Internet.